Instructor Notes

We tend to think of culture as something other people have. We often don't realize that we, ourselves, have culture. We all have it, and we need to learn what it is.

Handout: A Summary of the World

Participant Guide/Instructional Materials

If we could shrink the Earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, and if all existing human ratios remained the same, it would look roughly like like:

- There should be 57 Asians, 21
 Europeans, 14 from the Western
 Hemisphere (North and South) and 8
 Africans.
- 52 would be female; 48 would be male.
- 70 would be non-white; 30 white.
- 70 would be non-Christian; 30 Christian.
- 50 percent of the entire world's wealth would be in the hands of only 6 people and all 6 would be citizens of the United States.
- 11 would be homosexual; 89 would be heterosexual.
- 80 would live in sub-standard housing.
- 70 would be unable to read.
- 50 would suffer from malnutrition
- 1 would be near death; 1 would be pregnant.
- 1 would have a college degree.
- 1 would own a computer.

Source: Dr. Phillip M. Harter, Stanford University School of Medicine

Ask: How many of you think there is a right way to put toilet paper on the roll?

Culture provides the lens through which we view the world.

It provides the <u>logic</u> by which we order and the <u>grammar</u> by which it makes sense.

Culture is central to what we see, how we make sense of what we see, and how we express ourselves. An example would be if there were light shining through holes in a roof. Each person viewing the light coming through the holes would see something different; we all have different perspectives.

Culture is all about who we are, and how we identify ourselves.

As we take on the exciting challenge of working together, cultures sometime conflict. We can and do misunderstand each other, and react in ways that can hinder what are otherwise promising partnerships.

Today, we'll talk a little bit about the hows and why of this, and how we can understand the <u>influence of culture on all</u> that we do/think/are.

In so doing, we become more aware. Cultural differences won't go away, but we can learn how to think about them and work with them, use the to our advantage. Everyone brings something different to the table, in part due to cultural differences.

Oftentimes, (most of the time) most of us are unaware that culture is acting upon us, and influencing how we think about the world and how we respond to particular situations. Sometimes we are not even aware that we have values that are different from each other.

The goal of today is to make you all a little

bit more aware of how culture acts upon us, both by talking about what culture is, and how it works, but also how it affects how we interact.

Now that we know a little bit about what culture is, I'd like you all to take a few minutes and do a cultural survey with your neighbors, and then we'll all tell each other about our cultural background.

One of the interesting things about western culture is that our identity is tied to what we do. In FWS, we identify ourselves by what we do for the organization and how long we have been with the organization.

Exercise: Take 10 minutes and talk with your neighbor. Introduce yourselves to them from a cultural perspective. I am purposely not giving you a definition at this time.

Now if you want, you can tell your class a little bit about your cultural background. I'll start. (Instructor provides a cultural introduction.) Instructor should mentally count to 10 to give participants time to volunteer.

Understanding what motivates people, what drives people—that's the key to partnerships.

When we first meet people, we register many things right away, such as age, ethnicity, gender, etc. Assumptions are made from the things we register, and sometimes the assumptions are flat-out wrong. Sometimes when people look like us, we think they think like us, act us, etc.

How do you begin to understand others' cultures? You practice, practice, practice at communication. It all comes down to personality, which comes from culture.

Page 3-6 A definition of culture.

Culture is a set of rules or standards, that the members consider proper and acceptable. Culture consists of abstract values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world that lie behind peoples' behavior. These are shared by members of society, and are considered acceptable within that society.

Page 3-7 Culture informs all that we do

Based on how others talk/look/act.

A definition of culture:

- Culture is a set of rules or standards that, when acted upon by the members of a society, produces behavior that falls within a range of variance the members consider proper and acceptable.
- ➤ Culture consists of abstract values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world that lie behind peoples' behavior and that their behavior reflects. These are shared by members of society, and when acted upon, they produce behavior considered acceptable within that society.
- Culture is what is normal to all that are part of it.
- ➤ We don't think about it—but culture is who we are—It provides the basic parameters to our understanding of how things work. We assume that others share our understanding, and when they don't, it can be confusing or even cause conflict.

Culture informs all that we do

- ➤ What assumptions do we make about others based on our cultural background?
- ➤ Think about Gender/ethnic/education/ disciplinary background and how that affects how we think about the world? Others?
- ➤ How can it affect partnerships?

Culture must:

- Satisfy the basic needs of those who live by its rules.
- Provide for continuity and provide an orderly existence for members of society.
- > Strike balance between self-interests of

Page 3-2 Culture is learned

Think about the Foundations class—what do we learn in that class? Why are new employees encouraged to take it? *To learn the culture of the agency.*

What is the mission of the FWS? 4C's: Consultation, cooperation and communication in the service of conservation.

What are the central tenets of FWS? Why?

We assume that others share our understanding, and when they don'

Page 3-3 Culture is symbolic

What are some symbols of the FWS?

- individuals and needs of society as a whole.
- Change and adapt to new circumstances.

Culture is learned

- ➤ We learn our culture through a process called "Enculturation."
- ➤ Learning culture is largely unconscious, especially when we are young; but as we get older and are trying to learn another culture, it can and does become conscious.
- When we are young, we learn culture from our parents, siblings, teachers, and later from our friends.
- Sometimes culture is taught directly, i.e., when parents tell a child to say thank you, or to wash their hands before dinner or after they've gone to the bathroom (ideal versus real), or to speak only when spoken to.
- ➤ Culture is also transmitted through observation, i.e., children pay attention to what is going on around them and unconsciously or consciously model themselves after that, or NOT.
- ➤ When in a new job, we take our cues, are of learning the new organizational culture, from our co-workers.

Culture is symbolic

➤ A symbol is anything (words/utterance, icon or material thing or even a natural phenomena that is given special

The blue goose.

Achronyms – The Federal bureaucracy way.

Anything else? Other agency symbols?

DOI Buffalo

Use of symbols builds community.

Page 3-4 Culture is shared

What is shared within the FWS?

All of the pieces fit together, so when one changes, all of the others change or at least adapt.

As an example, after the invention of the steam engine, the place of work began to be separate from the home for the first time in history. Suburbs built up, and societal structures also developed to accommodate the change.

Page 3-5 Culture is patterned

meaning) to which some group of people have assigned an arbitrary meaning that may well have nothing to do with the thing itself.

- * Example from western culture: Dove = peace; Oak tree = strength; Olive branch = peace
- * A large part of our cultural meaning comes from understanding symbols.
- Only people (as opposed to other animals) use symbols, and all cultural groups use symbols.
- Difference between symbols and signs.
- > Culture is arbitrary (to a certain extent).

Culture is shared

- Culture is an attribute not of individuals per se but rather of individuals as members of groups.
- ➤ The social transmission of culture tends to unify people by providing us with a common experience.
- We earn it through observation/ listening/talking and interacting with people.
- ➤ Shared cultural beliefs, values, memories, expectations, and ways of thinking often (but not always) override differences in people.
- ➤ The commonalty of experience in turn tends to generate a common understanding of future events.
- Americans often have difficulty understanding the power of culture because of the value that American culture places on individuality.
- ➤ In America, individuality is a shared cultural trait (you're unique, you're special, you can do anything YOU want to do . . .).

Culture is patterned

<u>Learned</u> patterns of behavior

Adaptive means practices help things along. Recycling is a culturally acceptable practice and also good for the environment.

Maladaptive means a cultural norm does not help things along. For instance, having many children may be culturally accepted but not the best choice for the environment. In the FWS, people are encouraged to work at more stations in order to be promoted, but this practice does not promote strong partnerships.

What about the FWS is adaptive/

What is maladaptive?

Annual budgets

Insertion of politics into science

Page 3-8 Culture is basic to being part of a community.

Culture takes the natural biological urges that all humans have and that we share with all animals and teaches us to express it in cultural ways.

i.e. eating (when and what), sex, waste elimination, shelter

but also fight/flight impulse (what are culturally appropriate ways to deal with this?)

Bottom line: (Sharing culture is basic to being part of a community)

Culture is adaptive and culture is maladaptive.

Culture takes the natural biological urges that all humans have and that we share with all animals and teaches us to express it in cultural ways.

- ➤ I.e., eating (when and what), sex, waste elimination, shelter
- ➤ But also fight/flight impulse (what are culturally appropriate ways to deal with this?)

Culture is basic to being part of a community.

- ➤ Through culture people create, remember, and deal with ideas.
- Sharing culture is basic (and essential) to being part of a community.
- Everyone knows what is expected (not that we always abide by the expectations) but we know what the rules are and we know the consequences of following them, and not following them.

Page 3-9 Ethnocentrism Challenge: Know that we all have it and need to be aware of it.	Definition: a tendency to view one's own culture as superior and to apply one's own cultural values in judging the behavior and beliefs of people raised in other cultures.
	 Ethnocentrism is a cultural universal. Meaning that people everywhere think that familiar explanations, opinions and customs are right, true, proper and moral. Think about the statement – "It's human nature."
	 What does that mean? Because of ethnocentrism, different behavior is often seen as strange or savage.
Think about stereotypes of state/Federal/NGO "Culture"	Think about how this can affect partnerships?
Page 3-10 Cultural Relativism and Naïve Realism	Cultural Relativism Opposite of ethnocentrism.
	The argument that all cultures should be looked at as unique and not be judged by the standards of another.
	Viewing cultures without judgment.
	Naïve Realism
Ask: How many people here have dogs?	The belief that humans and societies everywhere see the world in the same way.
Ask: How many of you allow dogs to sleep with you?	➤ I.e., beauty is the same for all people everywhere, or all people think about dogs the way that westerns do (!).
There are people who are appalled by that.	
Beauty is another thing that differs according to culture.	

Activity: Page 3-13

Have participants turn to the Activity page on 3-13 and give them 5 minutes to begin completion of the page. For "Community Culture," use whatever community you choose. After 5 minutes, ask a couple of participants to offer their responses.

State: This is the first step in recognizing the different cultures that exist in your partnership. This helps to identify commonalities.

When doing this activity, try to figure out what your "trigger points" are and how they fit in the context of a partnership.

Page 3-11 Culture and Communication

There are many ways in which cultures, as a whole, tend to vary from one another, including:

- Different attitudes towards conflict (overt versus passive)
- Different approaches to completing tasks (now versus whenever)
- Different decision making styles (definitive versus wishy-washy)
- Different attitudes towards disclosure (i.e., divulging lots of personal information versus none)
- Perhaps the biggest is communication styles.

Culture and Communication

Culture provides the lens through which we view the world, the logic by which we order it and the grammar by which it makes sense.

Culture is central to **what** we see, **how we make sense** of what we see and **how we express ourselves**.

As we take on the exciting challenge of working together, cultural values sometimes cause conflict. We can misunderstand each other, and react in ways that can hinder what are otherwise promising partnerships.

Oftentimes (most of the time) many of us are unaware that culture is acting upon us, and influencing how we think about the world, and how we respond to particular situations. Sometimes we are not even aware that we have values that are different from others!

There are many ways in which cultures, as a whole, tend to vary from one another.

One of these s differences in communication styles.

The way people communicate varies widely between and within cultures.

One aspect of communication styles is language usage.

Across cultures, some words and phrases are used in different ways—for example, the meaning of "yes" varies from "maybe I'll consider it" to "definitely!", with many shades in between.

Another major aspect of communication style is the degree given to **non-verbal** communication.

This includes not one facial expressions and gestures, but also involved personal distance, eye contact, sense of timing, handshake, etc.

In addition, different norms regarding the appropriate degree of assertiveness (verbal and non-verbal) in communicating can lead to cultural misunderstandings (i.e. what does yelling mean? Anger? Excitement?).

In summary: Culture Drives Communication

People communicate what is meaningful to them.

What people say (as well as what they don't say) is culturally driven.

How the say it is culturally driven.

We interpret others' communication (and behavior, values, etc.) through our own cultural lens—thus there is lots of opportunity for miscommunication.

It is important that people have the time and opportunity to say what it is they want to say. For instance, those who communicate by telling a story.

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